

## What can you expect to get from this module?

Academic press, which is the way rigor is frequently manifested at the organizational level, refers to the extent to which the school community experiences a strong emphasis on academic success and specific standards of achievement. Although school leaders generally recognize the importance of rigor, many are not thoroughly and accurately measuring, monitoring, and encouraging rigor. Too often, it is a vague concept that means that instruction is “hard, tough, and sometimes boring.”

In this training, school leaders learn that the level of cognitive complexity of expected learning (rigor) may be directly examined at the classroom level in lesson plans, unit plans, and course content; teacher assignments and student work; formative and summative assessments and rubrics; and the tight alignment of these elements to challenging standards.

School leaders learn how to use tools and strategies to determine whether rigor exists in their classrooms (by evaluating the alignment among expected student learning, teaching, and assessing) and to determine whether rigor exists systemically in their schools.

**Who should take this training?** This module is designed to be taught to school teams comprised of administrators and teacher leaders.

## Big Ideas in This Module

- *Rigor means having high expectations in curriculum standards, classroom assignments, ongoing assessment, and testing.*
- *All of the above must be aligned for maximum student achievement.*
- *Typically, classroom expectations decline from one grade level to the next.*
- *A taxonomy is a useful tool for classifying objectives, instruction, and assessment to determine level of rigor.*
- *The revised Bloom’s taxonomy helps us to analyze cognitive demand along two dimensions.*
- *Using the taxonomy can result in rich discussions about intentions, assumptions, and outcomes.*
- *The very act of using the taxonomy can motivate us toward demanding higher levels of rigor.*
- *Alignment (standards → objectives → assessment tasks → instructional strategies) is essential to raising the level of rigor.*
- *We attend to what we measure! If we are serious about raising the level of rigor in our school, we must accurately assess where we are now.*
- *Monitoring and measuring rigor at the classroom level is a multi-faceted, ongoing, collaborative process in which a variety of strategies should be used.*

**Other SREB Leadership Curriculum Modules that support this one.** There are no requisites. Related modules include *Meeting the Standards* and *Prioritizing, Mapping, and Monitoring the Curriculum*.

**What will you have to do to get the most from this module?** Participants should attend as school teams and must commit to attending four sessions (five days total), completing prework and homework, and completing a portfolio.

**Required text.** Anderson, Lorin W. and David R. Krathwohl. (2001.) *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

**Module Design.** This training includes two workshops. Each is two days long. Each section is described below.

**Pework (about three hours).** Participants read a portion of the required text and also gather standards related to a single subject matter and grade level, for analysis in class.

**Introduction and Overview (45 minutes).** Participants introduce themselves and complete the following statement: "One benefit our district's students should receive from a successful university-district partnership is..." Then, the facilitator shows a series of slides that illustrate the urgent need for school improvement.

**Building an Understanding of Rigor (5 hours, 45 minutes).** This section begins with an icebreaker in which participants begin to explore the definition of rigor. This exploration continues in a jigsaw exercise. After the jigsaw, school teams work on the definition of rigor that they will present to their colleagues at their schools.

After a brief lecturette on rigor, participants look at some artifacts from a hypothetical school and evaluate the message that school is sending about rigor. Next, the trainer explains how and why the revised Bloom's taxonomy will be used as a vehicle for evaluating rigor in this module. Finally, participants apply that knowledge by categorizing a variety of objectives, instructional activity, and assessment on the taxonomy.

**Homework Between Two Days of Workshop One.** Participants read an analysis of a unit on MacBeth and a chapter in the required text on alignment and answer some guiding questions about alignment and level of rigor.

**Applying Our Understanding of Rigor (all of day two).** Participants continue the work of day

one by first looking at some objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment tasks in isolation and placing them on the taxonomy table. Then, after a discussion on the importance of alignment, they do the same for all the elements in a single unit of study. Finally, they look at indicators of levels of rigor and plan how to assess rigor in their schools.

**Homework: Follow-up on Workshop Two.** Participants extend the work to their school communities by informing them and educating them about the importance of academic press and raising the level of rigor. Second, participants continue using a collaborative process to identify rigor of standards in select grade levels and subject areas. Third, participants gather some unit materials for use in workshop two.

**Analyzing Rigor in Our Classrooms (all of day one of workshop two).** Participants look at the data they have gathered and work in teams to map out the level of rigor in assessments, instruction, and standards and then check the alignment of rigor in these areas. Then, they discuss strategies for increasing rigor in objectives, instruction, and assessment at the classroom level.

**Analyzing Rigor at a Schoolwide Level (all of day two of workshop two).** By this point, participants should have a good idea of what rigor is, how to measure it, and strategies for increasing it. The focus of the discussion will shift to how to gather a schoolwide picture of rigor. Given a variety of samples and tools, including a survey, participants figure out how to gather and organize schoolwide data around rigor. The workshop ends with participants planning next steps for the systematic monitoring of academic press.